

Bethel, PA— The National Coordinator of the non-partisan 564-member Elder Justice Coalition called it “the most significant vote specifically on elder justice ever taken in the House.” Passed last month after being introduced by Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07), the Elder Abuse Victims Act (H.R. 5352) addresses the need for improved preventative measures to reduce instances of abuse and includes provisions to strengthen law enforcement and prosecution efforts. Speaking with residents of the Belmont Retirement Community, Congressman Sestak detailed his ongoing efforts in this area. } —

“As Hubert Humphrey said, part of the moral test of a government is how it treats those in the twilight of life, the seniors,” said Congressman Sestak. “The National Research Council panel appointed to review the risk and prevalence of elder abuse estimates that between one and two million Americans age 65 or older have been victims of elder abuse and we have a responsibility to take action. I am proud that as part of my efforts to pass this bill, the House Judiciary Committee’s subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism and Homeland Security held the first House of Representatives hearing about this pressing topic in 17 years. I look forward to continuing my work on this issue in Washington and in my District.”

One key provision of the legislation funds a comprehensive report to study the laws and practices relating to elder abuse, as well as a proposed plan that explains objectives, priorities, policies and long-term plans for elder justice programs. In addition, the bill institutes Victims Advocacy Grants to establish pilot programs for health care providers, social services employees, law enforcement and court personnel, and victim advocates; and creates Emergency Crisis Response Teams to offer victims immediate, short-term emergency services.

Another topic of particular interest to Belmont residents was the financial rescue package signed into law eight days ago. Congressman Sestak explained his support for and answered questions about the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act. The Congressman helped pass the legislation to ensure his constituents do not face the unavailability of affordable car, education, small business and other consumer loans, or a crash in the stock market, where the value of life savings, pensions, and 401K’s would be lost.

“I have been focused on the financial crisis since February when the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) alerted me that it had to stop making student loans because of credit market problems,” said Congressman Sestak. “I asked Treasury Secretary Paulson and Federal Reserve Chairman Bernanke for intervention at that time, but they disagreed.



“Unfortunately, what began with foreclosures in sub-prime mortgages, has devastated a growing number of financial institutions, causing a widespread credit freeze, where lending has stopped because of the fear that mortgage-related securities held by banks may soon make these banks insolvent. We needed to remove the dead weights that are pulling down our economy and the bills we voted on in the House also established the necessary rigorous oversight and accountability to ensure that the plan to do so would be properly implemented.”

Attendees at the forum also received a legislative update from the Congressman, who has supported a number of other bills of specific importance to seniors:

- Legislation introduced by Congressman Sestak to establish a Silver Scholarship Program offers a \$1000 scholarship to anyone 55 years of age or older, who performs 500 hours of volunteer services in a 12 month period. The program specifically encourage seniors to use their time, talent, experience and resources to mentor young children and youth in after-school programs
- The Community Choice Act of 2007, which the Congressman has cosponsored, allows those eligible for Medicaid-funded assisted living to live at home rather than moving to long-term care facilities.
- The Expanding American Homeownership Act of 2007 saves a vital housing program for seniors that enables them to remain financially independent without selling their homes.
- The Small Business Entrepreneurial Development Programs Act, introduced by the Congressman, enhances critical programs like the Service Corps for Retired Executives (SCORE), which provides entrepreneurs with free counseling assistance by former executives.
- The Medicare Prescription Drug Negotiation Act, which Congressman Sestak helped pass the House as a cosponsor allows the Secretary of Health and Human Services to negotiate lower drug prices for seniors.



- The "CHAMP" Act would eliminate co-payments and deductibles for preventive services and for initial preventive physical exams, in addition to providing free screening tests for prostate cancer, glaucoma, and mammograms.

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of "Deep Blue," the Navy's anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the "Global War on Terrorism." He served as President Clinton's Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.*

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